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General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

205th Meeting
Friday, 3 May 1996, 12 noon
New York

Chairman: Mr. Hoffmann . . . . . (Germany)

The meeting was called to order at 12.05 p.m.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman: As we approach the end of the session, the two Working Groups have been working intensively on their respective subjects over the past week. Currently, Working Group I is in its final stage of negotiations on a text on principles and guidelines for international arms transfers. I trust that the Working Group will successfully conclude work on agenda item 4 by adopting a consensus text. All delegations are, of course, invited to help the Chairman, Mr. Chirila.

Exchange of views on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament

The Chairman: With respect to Working Group II on item 5, divergent views have been expressed during the course of its deliberations. This plenary meeting has in fact been convened, following the adoption of the report of Working Group II half an hour ago, specifically to give delegations the opportunity to talk on record about the Chairmen's working paper that will be attached to the report of the Commission; we have records only in plenary meeting, and thus, none of their golden words will be lost. That is also why I have asked Ambassador Erdenechuluun to sit at my side and cover me if shells come in.

Mr. Vattani (Italy): First of all, on behalf of the European Union, I should like to thank you, Sir, for your initiative in allowing us, at the end of these two weeks' work, to give our comments on the results achieved in Working Group II, and especially on the working paper of the Chairman of the Working Group. Through you, all the partners of the European Union would like first to extend their heartfelt thanks to our Chairman, Ambassador Erdenechuluun, and to the Secretariat, for their untiring efforts.

The European Union considers that these two weeks have produced a very interesting and stimulating discussion. As members of the European Union, we have tried our best to contribute to the positive atmosphere, making statements on 23 and 30 April. We are very happy that today's statements, along with other contributions from other delegations regarding the paper submitted by the Chairman of the Group, will be put on record and will help us in our future work.

I would just like to recall that in our statement of 30 April we tried to put forward some basic principles which we felt could be shared by all delegations participating in the Disarmament Commission. We tried our best, and we are happy that the comments from other delegations belonging to other regional groups were in general very positive.

But this is an appropriate occasion for us to demonstrate our gratitude to our Chairman for his efforts in producing his paper. We think that it is a good document which the European Union felt that it could accept with just a few constructive changes. I think that it could be to the benefit of all participants here to know the basic elements that the European Union considers to be essential. Indeed, if we had been able to put these elements into the Chairman's paper, we could have endorsed it.

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This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

First, I would like to refer to the date of a fourth special session on disarmament (SSOD). The exact date for convening SSOD IV could be decided towards the end of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. Naturally, the decision, in the view of all the members of the European Union, should be taken by consensus.

As concerns the balance between items on nuclear disarmament and those on conventional disarmament, the European Union felt that the text submitted by the Chairman needed a clear reference to an agenda balance between items on weapons of mass destruction and those on conventional weapons.

As concerns non-proliferation, we think that it is a concern of all the members of the international community that a clear reference to non-proliferation be contained in the document submitted to us. The European Union made suggestions for adding a clear reference to non-proliferation to the document.

On certain other elements, I would like to stress that the European Union believes that the use of "shopping lists" of items could be counterproductive and detract from a focused debate at SSOD IV. That is why we proposed a three-stage debate; we actually received very positive responses from many delegations belonging to different regional groups. I should like to recall the three stages of this debate. The discussion could be structured, first, on developments in the international situation relevant to disarmament and non-proliferation following the end of the cold war; secondly, on the recent progress achieved in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation to enhance international peace and security; and, finally and most important, on future directions.

With the elements that I have indicated and with these very few changes, the European Union felt that the paper submitted by the Group Chairman could have provided a very good basis for future work. But in any case, we are happy that the document which the Chairman submitted on his own responsibility is complemented by contributions from delegations.

I would like to repeat that, in this phase of the preparation of SSOD IV, the European Union's approach is centred on a discussion of general principles rather than of items. We believe that SSOD IV could be useful in giving new life to multilateral disarmament efforts if consensus were reached on basic principles.

To conclude, I would like to say that the members of the European Union welcome the non-confrontational mood that we have witnessed here during these two weeks of work. We hope that this is going to be a beacon for the First Committee in its work this fall in the search for a consensus resolution on SSOD IV.

Mr. Rider (New Zealand): Through you, Mr. Chairman, I would like to place on record my delegation's very sincere thanks to Ambassador Erdenechuluun for his work in orchestrating our debate in Working Group II during the past two weeks. The support he received from the Secretariat was also much appreciated.

I shall be brief. New Zealand's substantive position on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) was set out in the paper which I presented to the Working Group on 30 April, and which I have asked should become an official working paper of Working Group II. I will not repeat the details in that paper. I would like to place on record New Zealand's support for the Chairman's paper, which we consider provides a very valuable summation of views expressed during our exchange on a full special session on disarmament. We believe that it will provide a useful basis for further discussion on the special session at this year's General Assembly session.

New Zealand is, like the European Union, hopeful — indeed, confident — that the positive spirit we have seen displayed here over the past two weeks will be evident at the General Assembly.

Mr. Madden (United States of America): First, I want to thank Ambassador Erdenechuluun for his considerable efforts in guiding Working Group II in constructive dialogue and productive work. The paper which our Chairman personally produced is a valuable contribution and may serve as the basis for further work.

I note the statement in the Working Group report that the Chairman's paper represents his personal views only and does not prejudice in any way the views of any participant. The Chairman's statement notes that there was wide agreement in the Working Group that the fifty-first session of the General Assembly should decide the date for the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). During our debate, the United States and others observed that it would be best to prepare thoroughly for an SSOD before deciding on a date. My delegation believes that it would

be risky to predict now that we would be ready to decide on a date for convening SSOD IV during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. As suggested by the European Union during Working Group debate, a decision on a date to convene SSOD IV should be made through a consensus resolution of the General Assembly.

The introductory paragraph in the Chairman's paper mentions the need for thorough and adequate preparation, a statement which the United States delegation believes should have been broadened to include the need for pre-agreement on the objectives and desired results of SSOD IV. As Ambassador Ledogar made clear in his statement, which has been made an official document of the Working Group, the cost of an SSOD will be significant in times of scarce financial resources. My delegation therefore believes that the cost of an SSOD should have been mentioned in the Chairman's paper, as a means of showing that the meeting would represent a major commitment of scarce resources and should not be lightly undertaken.

My delegation believes that the "Objectives" section of the Chairman's paper should have contained language on the need for a proper balance among nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, conventional arms and other disarmament issues. Similarly, my delegation believes that non-proliferation should have been specified as a general principle and objective. Some delegations submitted suggestions on topics which an SSOD might discuss, but when taken together, much more attention was devoted to nuclear weapons.

The next special session would take place in changed circumstances, after the end of the cold war. There should be discussion on the whole range of disarmament issues, with due attention devoted to dramatic advances, including deep reductions already made in nuclear weapons, and to the need for continuing reductions in conventional arms, as well as to prospects for the future in disarmament and non-proliferation.

Mr. Parnohadiningrat (Indonesia): The States members of the non-aligned group agreed to request the representative of Colombia, as Chairman of the group, to deliver a statement on behalf of the non-aligned members, and to offer comments on the Chairman's paper. However, as the representative of Colombia is not present, and with the permission of non-aligned member States, I would like to make the following statement.

On behalf of the States members of the Commission belonging to the Non-Aligned Movement, my delegation would, first, like to express its appreciation to the Chairman of Working Group II, on the fourth Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament (SSOD IV), for submitting his working paper (A/CN.10/1996/WG.II/WP.6). We welcome the efforts made by the Ambassador of Mongolia, as Chairman of the Working Group on an exchange of views on SSOD IV, to generate discussion in the Working Group as an initial step towards a structured process for preparing the convening of SSOD IV, as called for in resolution 50/70 F. As a preliminary remark, the Non-Aligned Movement would like to state that it can go along with the regional thrust of the paper, which the Non-Aligned Movement considers a positive step towards the convening of SSOD IV.

The Non-Aligned Movement would like to stress that resolution 50/70 F calls for the establishment of a Preparatory Committee for SSOD IV to prepare a draft agenda for the special session, to examine all relevant questions relating to that session and to submit its recommendation thereon to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. However, taking into account the need to conduct thorough and adequate preparations for the successful conclusion of SSOD IV, it is the view of the Non-Aligned Movement that the Preparatory Committee should be convened before the end of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

The Non-Aligned Movement expressed its views on the objectives of SSOD IV in its working paper, which states:

> "With respect to the objectives of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries believe that the special session should set the future course of action in the field of disarmament and related security matters and, in this context, emphasize the importance of multilateralism in the process of disarmament, bearing in mind the historical significance of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, the first special session devoted to disarmament, and principles, guidelines and priorities envisaged therein, as well as the need to preserve and build upon the achievements of the first special session devoted to disarmament." *(A/CN.10/1996/WG.II/WP.3, para. 3)*

The Non-Aligned Movement also submitted in its paper an indicative list of possible substantive issues for consideration by the Preparatory Committee of SSOD IV.

Those are the preliminary views of the Non-Aligned Movement which should be further addressed during the forthcoming Preparatory Committee meetings of SSOD IV.

Mr. Larsen (Norway): Like previous speakers, I will be very brief in thanking you, and in thanking Ambassador Erdenechuluun for his excellent work in our Working Group. I also thank the Secretariat for their efforts.

I would like to refer to the statement previously made by Italy on behalf of the European Union. Norway fully associates itself with that statement. We thank the Chairman of Working Group II for having produced a good personal working paper. We agree with the European Union that certain elements could have been included, specifically a reference to the need for a consensus decision to be taken upon the convening of a fourth special session devoted to disarmament, with which we agree in principle.

The need for a balanced approach between nuclear and conventional weapons is also an important element for us. A reference to non-proliferation would have been welcome as well. The European Union also made the point that a "shopping list" of items could detract from focused debate. We think that is a good and valid point which should be taken into account. We should look at the whole range of disarmament issues in that context.

We also agree with the United States delegation that the cost of convening SSOD IV could have been mentioned.

Again, we thank the Chairman of the Group for his personal contribution to creating a very constructive and positive atmosphere in the Working Group, which bodes well for the future.

Mr. Snell (Canada): Through you, Mr. Chairman, we too would like to express our appreciation for the serious and extensive efforts of the Chairman of Working Group II to find common ground among members of the Working Group on SSOD IV. We think that the working paper prepared by him demonstrates the depth of the commitment of all delegations to continue serious discussion on this issue. We are also pleased and encouraged by the constructive spirit of the various working papers submitted by delegations during the course of the past two weeks.

My delegation would like to note our support, in particular, for the thrust of the working paper submitted by the New Zealand delegation. We believe it outlines quite well most of the elements necessary for this discussion to develop practical, achievable and forward-looking ideas.

We look forward to continued productive discussion on the holding of a fourth special session devoted to disarmament.

Mr. Felicio (Brazil): The delegation of Brazil considers that the objectives of the Disarmament Commission in considering agenda item 5, on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, have been fully met. What we wanted was to start the process of preparation for SSOD IV, and I think we were successful in our endeavours.

In the Working Group presided over by the representative of Mongolia with his very well-known ability, our preliminary exchange of views was very useful and constructive.

We are all aware that discussions in the Disarmament Commission about SSOD IV are not intended to replace the appropriate work to be carried out by the Preparatory Committee of the special session. No formal decision is to be taken by this Commission, and the documents produced here have only a reference value. These documents, however, will certainly be very useful in our future work in preparation for the fourth special session devoted to disarmament.

Mr. Kellar (Germany): Let me, through you, Mr. Chairman, thank Ambassador Erdenechuluun for the very constructive way he guided us in Working Group II.

I would like to make some additional remarks about what Ambassador Vattani said on behalf of the European Union. In the view of my delegation, one of the main achievements of the work done in Working Group II is the view shared by all of us that to be a successful exercise a future SSOD IV must be based on a common understanding of its scopes and its objectives. I would like to pay tribute to Ambassador Erdenechuluun; I think his working paper was very helpful and very constructive in that regard.

We welcome the spirit of consensus, which sharply contrasts with last year's session of the Disarmament Commission. We should try to preserve this constructive

mood to bring about a consensus resolution in this year's First Committee, to lay the ground for a future successful SSOD IV. A resolution this fall would be a decisive step forward towards such an endeavour. We would spoil the chances for a successful SSOD IV if we failed to bring about a consensus resolution. I think there is a general, wide agreement in this room about the necessity for such a consensus resolution as a basis for future endeavours. I hope we can preserve this spirit so as not to spoil the chances of our common endeavours.

Mr. Orlov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): First of all, I would like to associate myself with the assessments voiced by the Chairman of Working Group II, and with the expressions of gratitude for the great amount of work which was done by the Chairman personally and by the Secretariat.

We believe that we have had a useful exchange of views during the present session enabling us better to clarify the positions of participants in the discussion of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). We are going to study these views most carefully and shall duly take them into account.

I do not wish to repeat the views expressed by the Russian delegation in our statement earlier this session. We believe that the fourth special session devoted to disarmament should be an important large-scale international event, and should yield a substantive political result. We believe, therefore, that it should be extremely carefully prepared. I think that no one here is interested in having the future special session come to naught.

We find the working paper prepared by the Chairman of the Working Groups useful. We understand that producing such documents represents the art of dealing with what is possible, which is why they are useful. We think that this document will serve as a good basis for further work.

In conclusion, I should like to associate myself with those speakers who have noted the positive and non-confrontational atmosphere that prevailed during the work of our session; we hope that preparations for the special session devoted to disarmament will take place in precisely the same kind of constructive conditions.

Mr. Li Song (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): First of all, the Chinese delegation would like to thank sincerely the Chairman of Working Group II, the representative of Mongolia. We appreciate his efforts during the Group's session to coordinate the exchange of views on the fourth special session devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). We very much appreciate his efforts. We also thank the Secretariat for the tremendous amount of work it has done.

The Chinese delegation has on many occasions stated its support for the convening of SSOD IV. We feel that, in view of the new international situation, there is a need to hold a new special session to review the past and look to the future, so that the international community can jointly chart the future course of disarmament.

In recent years, many countries have put forward reasonable proposals on disarmament; China itself has proposed a series of measures to that end. The topic has been addressed in the relevant General Assembly resolutions of recent years. We feel that important issues in the field of disarmament could be discussed comprehensively and in depth at SSOD IV. The Chinese delegation believes that so long as all sides have the necessary political will, SSOD IV will certainly be successful.

We feel that the ideas and contributions presented by all sides with respect to SSOD IV at this session of the Disarmament Commission can be used as a basis for future discussions. We hope that the joint efforts of the international community will lead to the successful holding of the special session.

Mr. García (Venezuela) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation has followed very carefully the activities of Working Group II. On this occasion, we would like to express our gratitude for the efforts made by a number of delegations in the search for balance between the various positions which were put forward during our discussions. These delegations include members of the Non-Aligned Movement and the European Union and the delegation of New Zealand.

In addition, my delegation would like to express special appreciation for the work carried out by Ambassador Erdenechuluun in chairing Working Group II, which was very effective and, obviously, fruitful. Accordingly, my delegation wishes also to express its resolute support for the paper submitted by the Chairman of Working Group II. It will serve as a basis for future exchanges of views on the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Mr. Paek (Republic of Korea): At the outset, my delegation would like to express its deepest gratitude to Ambassador Erdenechuluun, Chairman of Working Group II, for his endeavours and dedication in the course of preparing the Chairman's paper, which was submitted yesterday. I believe that it will serve as a useful basis for our further deliberations.

We are pleased to note that the basic ideas or concepts contained in the Chairman's paper are in line with my Government's position. My delegation shares the view that the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) will provide us with an opportunity to review and assess the progress achieved thus far and to prepare better for the future, and that thorough and adequate preparation is the key to ensuring its successful outcome. We hope that further consultations will be held concerning the timing and agenda of SSOD IV to reach a consensus, as we have done thus far.

With regard to the agenda to be discussed at SSOD IV, it is my delegation's view that the idea of three major themes, or of a three-stage discussion, which was put forward by the representative of Italy, deserves more attention and further consideration as the basis of our future work on SSOD IV.

Mr. Abdel Aziz (Egypt): At the outset, my delegation associates itself fully with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. My delegation wishes to make some additional remarks on the subject under consideration.

First, I believe that at this time we should be working towards the substantive success of SSOD IV through an extensive and substantive preparation on the subject. We should not lose sight of the time factor, which is essential and has a key role to play in the success of such an event. We know this from the experience of the United Nations and of other negotiating forums.

In this regard, we think that the result of the vote on General Assembly resolution 50/70 F and the widely shared point of view expressed in the Working Group confirm what has been stated by the Chairman of the Working Group, the representative of Mongolia: that there is wide agreement on the need to decide on the timing of SSOD IV by the end of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

The Chairman's paper is very balanced. It does not concentrate on any particular aspect of disarmament — be it nuclear disarmament, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), conventional arms or others. Of course, the positions of various parties are still divergent, but the paper as such is very balanced, and that is why we join in the non-aligned support of it.

My last remark is a procedural question. We note that the non-aligned countries have presented their preliminary point of view in a paper. We note that the European Union has also presented its preliminary point of view in a paper, as has New Zealand. But we were expecting to receive such a communication from the nuclear States of their vision of the substance of the discussion at the fourth special session — apart from the question of timing: we know that we still have differences with regard to when the special session is to be held. But we were expecting a paper from the nuclear States indicating what subjects they wish to discuss if we are going to have a fourth special session. Apparently this has not appeared, but we still hope that such a paper will be provided in the near future, either here in the Disarmament Commission or during the work of the Preparatory Commission for the special session.

The Chairman: It might be noted that two States members of the European Union are nuclear-weapon States. It might also be noted that there is a working paper submitted by the United States indicated in the report of Working Group II. It might further be noted that the list of items that was originally part of the first draft of the working paper of the Chairman of Working Group II is no longer there, but that this was not the result of the doings of nuclear-weapon States.

I should like Ambassador Erdenechuluun to take note of the many words of praise that have been addressed to him for his very positive work. Of course, we all know that he guided the Commission through last year's very difficult session. It is therefore apt that he should be guiding us now that a spirit of compromise and cooperation is prevailing at this session. We thank him very much.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.